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The management
of pregnancy.



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THE MANAGEMENT OF PREGNANCY.*

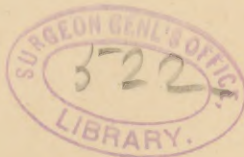
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Though the pregnant process is often called a physiological one it approaches so closely to a pathological state as to many times call forth all the resources of the most intelligent practitioner of medicine, and in no branch of our art will our efforts be more appreciated than in endeavoring to decrease the discomforts of the period of gestation,

Many women find themselves unusually well during this period, but it is of their more unfortunate sisters that we now speak.

Above everything else comes the necessity of favorable hygienic surroundings, both in regard to personal cleanliness and pleasant environments. Plenty of nutritious food should be eaten, and especially to be avoided are highly seasoned articles and alcoholic stimulants. The dress should be comfortably warm, and all constrictions, like corsets, garters, and heavy, tight waistbands should not be used, though in many women with large flabby abdomens an abdominal supporter is a means of great comfort. Excessive or overwork is to be avoided, but some pleasant, healthful employment is to be recommended both as a means of exercise and also to prevent the mind's dwelling on the approaching ordeal of labor. Aside from the physical conditions, we should endeavor to surround our patients with cheerful, congenial companions, with freedom from mental or moral worry; but at the same time the opposite extreme of morbid sympathy from over-officious friends or relatives should be studiously avoided. In regard to the general and special conditions, we will speak first of anæmia. During the early months it is well to institute a prophylactic treatment. Good milk, plenty of eggs, etc., are to be the mainstays. Food should be taken in small quantities and often if there is anorexia. Iron, arsenic, and strychnine, with the vegetable bitters, are indicated.

* Read before the Vermont State Medical Society.



The pernicious form is rare, and occurs principally in women who have borne children in rapid succession.

In my experience, one of the most trying complications of the pregnant state is the occurrence of uncontrollable vomiting. We have all types of this trouble from the slightest feeling of nausea in the early morning to the hyperemesis that takes the life of both mother and foetus. The animal, mineral, and vegetable kingdoms have all been searched for a remedy or even a palliative. Mechanical means and local applications have all been vaunted, and still we are without a trustworthy expedient for relief. Laceration or erosion of the cervix, faulty position of the uterus, indulgence in sexual intercourse, gastric or intestinal catarrh, constipation, and in the later months distention and many reflex causes, these all—nay, many others—come in as the causes, and our treatment must be as varied as is the ætiology; and alas! even then are we many times doomed to disappointment.

One of the first things to do is to relieve any constipation, using a seidlitz powder either alone or with bromide of soda. Fluid extract of cascara sagrada does excellent service also. Sexual intercourse should be prohibited in all cases that do not yield readily to treatment. Rest in bed is important. One of our best authorities—Lusk—recommends of all medicinal agents ten grains of bismuth subnitrate with five or ten grains of oxalate of cerium, taken ten minutes before eating. Half a drachm of chloral hydrate combined with forty or fifty grains of bromide of potash or soda in milk as a rectal injection very often is satisfactory. Some recommend the chloral in a suppository or capsule. I have never used it in this manner, but should imagine it would have too much of an irritant effect on the rectal mucous membrane for the patient's comfort. Nux vomica in gastric catarrh does good service. Fowler's solution, chloral hydrate, the bromides, atropine, drop doses of iodine, carbolic acid, ingluvin, hydrocyanic acid, pepsin preparations, alcohol in its various forms, or the inhalation of oxygen in its various forms, may succeed in individual cases. Ice-cold effervescing drinks are of use. Cocaine, either by the mouth or incorporated with vaseline as an ointment to the cervix, has some friends. Instances are on record of hypnotic suggestion apparently causing a cure. Try to nourish the patient. Hot or cold milk given with lime-water frequently and in small quantities will sometimes be retained. Beef tea, beef peptonoids, whites of eggs beaten with brandy, gruels, etc., give a variety of means of nourishment. If the food can not be retained at all it is well to use hypodermics of morphine either alone

or combined with atropine, and followed in thirty minutes by the nourishment. The influence of the opiate will quiet the reflex activity of the stomach and allow digestive and assimilative processes to take place. Complete rest of the stomach by partial or complete rectal feeding is a method to be utilized. Malpositions of the uterus should be corrected. Copeman's method is well and favorably known. Any lacerations or erosions of the cervix should be treated *secundum artem*. After all the methods of treatment enumerated the vomiting may still continue. The woman is emaciated, pulse frequent and weak, tongue parched and brown, urine scanty and perhaps albuminous, sordes on lips and teeth, disorders of the special senses, delirious, horrible eructations of gas from the stomach, vomiting incessantly, or perhaps there is a cessation of the emesis, which is to be looked upon with suspicion, as it is many times the forerunner of death. Ere we reach this fatal stage, and while the woman is yet able to bear the ordeal, an abortion should be produced. This should not be done till after mature deliberation, and with the advice of other practitioners. Nature sometimes steps in and takes the responsibility off our shoulders; but an expectant line of treatment must not be continued too long, as many, many fair lives have been lost by this same expectancy.

Constipation frequently and diarrhœa occasionally complicate pregnancy. The latter should be treated on the usual lines with, perhaps, some anodyne to quiet any reflex nervous irritability of the intestines. Constipation intensifies many of the discomforts of this period. Fluid extract of cascara, or cascara with malt, does good work. Care should be taken not to use evacuants that act by an irritant effect on the intestinal mucous membrane, or that produce a congested condition of the pelvic organs, for fear of a possible interruption of the gestation. If the urine is scanty and albuminous, the salines and diaphoretics are indicated. Varicose veins and hæmorrhoids are often troublesome. For the enlarged veins the blood pressure may be lowered by position and by saline laxatives in small quantities. Equalized pressure by means of elastic bandages should be used. Hot stimulating baths are exceedingly grateful. Nearly every case of pregnancy has a variable amount of œdema unconnected with any kidney lesion, ascertainable either by the aid of the usual chemical urinary tests or by the microscope, it being caused by the pressure on the returning venous blood currents. The slightest form shows itself only by swelling of the ankles and feet, and needs no treatment. If the œdema involves the legs and vulva, and something

seems necessary to be done, tonics should be administered, one of the best of which is the *mistura ferri et ammonii acetatis*, or Basham's mixture, which from its tonic and diaphoretic properties is especially indicated. Hot applications are useful. Saline purges, by increasing the hydræmic condition of the blood, increases the trouble. If the swelling and tension is so intense that gangrene of the skin is feared, puncture may be made with antiseptic precautions. Premature labor has followed, however, in so many instances as to be regarded as rather more than a coincidence. Caries of the teeth frequently make rapid progress during the pregnant state, and often severe toothache occurs without pathological change in the tooth, which resists medicinal treatment. Good authorities advocate the use of phosphate of lime as a preventive. Dental operations are not generally considered advisable. Ptyalism is one of the rarer complications, and often terminates only with the completion of pregnancy. It may be of a purely hysterical nature. Astringent mouth-washes, with belladonna and ergot internally, is good treatment.

Heartburn may be palliated by sodium salicylate, charcoal, magnesia, aromatic spirits of ammonia, etc. Limewater taken with milk is valuable.

Pruritus, either local or general, with or without anatomical change in the skin, sometimes, according to Barton Cooke Hirst, is so annoying as to consider the advisability of inducing an abortion. Perfect cleanliness, vaginal injections of boric-acid solutions, cloths saturated in a carbolic-acid solution or a strong hot soda solution and applied externally, are usually very grateful. If there is any lesion of the cervix, or any irritating discharge, it should be treated. Cocaine in solution affords at least temporary relief. Neuralgic affections are common. Prominently in this list we find the trigeminus involved. Liniments of various kinds may palliate, or even cure. Phenacetine, acetanilide, and the long list of coal-tar derivatives, gelsemium, cimicifuga, hyoscyamus, belladonna, cannabis indica, and electricity may all be tried.

If there are distinct inter- or remissions, quinine may be used with a good hope of success. Morphine should be a last resort. Many times the pain only ceases with the end of gestation. Insomnia is usually one of the minor discomforts, but its long continuance places the woman in a condition of lowered vitality for undergoing the pains of labor. We should see that she is in a proper hygienic state and takes plenty of fresh-air exercise, also that she avoids any excitement

or worry. The use of stimulating hot sponge baths, followed by a brisk rubbing at bedtime, is a useful and simple expedient. Some of the milder sleep-producers, as valerian, camphor, cannabis indica, etc., may be used. Sulphonal is an excellent remedy.

The galvanic current through the head is of great service many times. Irritability of the bladder is common, and often is not severe enough to call for treatment. Try to find the cause of the trouble, which may consist of increased acidity or alkalinity of the urine, or from displacement or change in position of the uterus. Nerve sedatives and diuretics are indicated. Psychical alterations in pregnancy are infrequent compared with the period of childbed and lactation. The predominating type is melancholia. The treatment is prophylactic and tonic. In a woman who is strongly neurotic we should especially insist on cheerful surroundings and pleasant diversions, with a close scrutiny of the secretory and excretory functions of the economy. An anæmic state is the rule in these cases, therefore tonics are of use.



